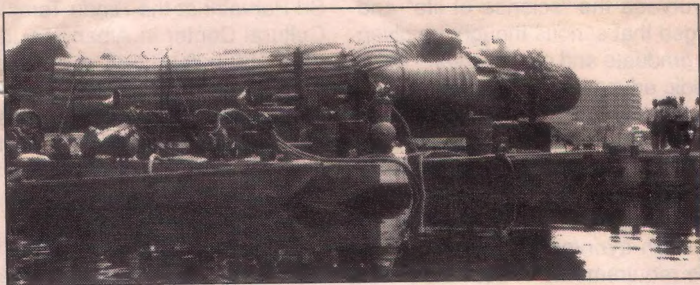


Sunken Buddha Rescued



By C.H.S.N. Murthy

It was the biggest salvage operation undertaken for a monolithic sculpture—surfacing the 350-ton Buddha statue that sunk to the bottom of Hussain Nagar Lake near Hyderabad, India. Carved from 1986 to '89 out of basalt stone, the Buddha mysteriously slid off its transport barge in the night hours of March 10th 1990. It was en route to its site on Gibraltar rock in the lake. Eight people were killed in the freak accident, and an equally freakish rain storm ripped through Andhra Pradesh for two solid days after the Buddha sunk.

Two years later, in April 1992, after several unsuccessful efforts,

salvage teams cranked up the basalt sculpture out of murky gray-green waters that reek of dead fish killed by severe industrial pollution. The Buddha was commissioned by the Andhra Pradesh government at a price of US\$2,400,000 as a show of religious pluralism. But the choice of the site—the horribly polluted Hussain Nagar Lake—allied spiritual leaders, astrologers and environmentalists to try and relocate the statue to a more suitable habitat.

The government is hoping the site will become a major tourist attraction, and have invited the Dalai Lama of Tibet to inaugurate the opening of the rescued Buddha.